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SUBJECT The CIA

TOM BROKAW: America's Central Intelligence Agency, or the Company, as it's known to insiders, has been under assault for the past couple of years, both for its organization and for some abuses that the CIA has engaged in here, as well as abroad. Recently, a number of people were let go from the CIA, and there have been stories that a lot of people who are left there are not happy with the current operation under the direction of Admiral Stansfield Turner.

Well, Ford Rowan, who covers that agency for NBC News, recently was able to get inside and to get an evaluation of how the CIA is standing up under all of this criticism. He's in our Washington News Center this morning. And Ford, why don't you bring us up to date.

FORD ROWAN: Good morning, Tom.

CIA Director Stansfield Turner says he wants a CIA that's lean and mean. Some eight hundred and twenty positions in the clandestine service are being cut.

To find out if morale has really been hurt, we talked to some people inside the CIA and some people who used to be inside the CIA.

These are not three CIA spies on a covert mission. But they do work for the CIA. They're commuters who have found that the shortest distance between their homes and the agency's Langley, Virginia headquarters is across the Potomac River. We show you this unique way of commuting because we found that the CIA is full of unique people.

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There are a lot of fascinating jobs at the CIA. But soon there will be fewer of them. And that's one reason for all of the turmoil at the agency. It used to be said that the CIA was a good place to work. That was before the news stories about domestic spying, drug experiments and assassination plots, before the "Halloween massacre." That's the name CIA employees are calling the mass firings of clandestine officers announced on October 31st.

Most of these people once worked for the CIA. This is a meeting of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, a group which was formed in 1975 to defend the CIA against its critics. Now it is doing the criticizing.

MAN: The designation of some twenty-five percent of the individuals to be eliminated has quite obviously generated morale problems of considerable magnitude.

ROWAN: But a current official in an interview arranged by the CIA defended the cuts.

MAN: Change. People fear change more than anything in the world. And this is a significant change, and it's an organizational change, and it's going to affect the way people think and the way people feel.

But we think in making these changes that we're doing what we have to.

JOHN MAURI: I'm sure they're being jeopardized.

ROWAN: John Mauri is a former CIA officer who once served as an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

MAURI: The institution is bound to grind down to a pretty slow pace, because people are worried about their jobs, they don't want to take initiative, they don't want to show imagination, they don't want to take chances. Everybody's running scared, and, in the intelligence business, why, you can't afford to have a lot of timid fellows there, because it's not a game for timid fellows.

ROWAN: These CIA employees are not practicing for some covert mission. This is a hobby they practice after hours in the hallways of the CIA complex.

Some people are worried that some of the CIA's methods of operating could become as obsolete as this Medieval form of combat. That's the real controversy. Do the cuts in the clandestine service mean big changes in the way the spy agency operates.

These CIA employees are analysts. The changes may

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benefit them. There seems to be a shift in emphasis to analysis and away from the clandestine forms of espionage, paramilitary activity and covert action.

This is a U-2 camera. The CIA utilizes photographs from spy planes and satellites. So technical means seem to be replacing the clandestine use of human spies.

Director Stansfield Turner was asked about CIA operations last year.

DIRECTOR STANSFIELD TURNER: The amount of covert action has reduced very remarkably over the past dozen years or so. And my feeling is that this is an exceptional circumstance that we would use covert action in. But I feel very strongly at the same time that we must maintain that capability for the kind of unusual circumstance that may arise.

ROWAN: Work goes on inside the CIA, but the firings and changes have hurt morale so much that the White House has decided on some management changes. Ambassador Frank Carlucci, a hard-nosed administrator, has been chosen by the White House as Deputy Director to run the day-to-day operations of the agency.

There were a lot of things the CIA would not let us see. They did let us photograph a touch football game played by teams in the CIA league. But even here the secrecy prevailed. When the cameras appeared, several players hid in the bushes. The quarterback wore a mask. At the CIA, it's hard to see behind the mask.

It's a time of great uncertainty inside the CIA.

Tom?

BROKAW: Ford, what about the White House role in all of this reorganization? Do you have a strong feeling that this is all being done at the direction of President Carter?

ROWAN: Well, Tom, the CIA says that the cuts were made by Admiral Turner and were not ordered by the President or Vice President Mondale, or any member of his staff. However, it seems that Turner's acting in consonance with the White House wishes. I think there is a change in the way the CIA operates, although Admiral Turner tends to downplay any significance in terms of the role of the CIA to be seen in these cuts.

BROKAW: Any recruiting problems for the CIA these days?

ROWAN: Well, the agency says it's continuing to have lots of applicants. It had thirty-seven thousand applicants last

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year for twelve hundred positions. Of these, ninety-three percent had college degrees and thirty-seven percent had advanced degrees

BROKAW: Ford Rowan, thank you very much.